

Segment N48:

Rural Southern Bliss

Lower to middle-income multi-generational families living in small towns

Resource: Mosaic 2021 by Experian.

Religious Experience in a Nutshell

Religious Perspective:

The Lord is my shepherd

Spiritual Issues:

Feelings of estrangement, anxieties about fate and emptiness

Common Church Presence

- Established, conservative churches
- Anti-crime and human rights advocates

- Struggling with urbanization
- Workaholics

- Bridge builders in divided communities
- Value counseling programs



Potential Influence

Lifestyle Compatibility	Family Group N <i>Pastoral Pride</i>	Frequent Neighbors
H28 Everyday Moderates P56 Mid-Scale Medley P59 Expanding Horizons R66 Ambitious Dreamers	N46 True Grit Americans N47 Countrified Pragmatics N48 Rural Southern Bliss N49 Touch of Tradition	Q62 Enjoying Retirement Q64 Established in Society S68 Small Town Sophisticates S70 Thrifty Singles

General Comments:

Rural Southern Bliss gravitate toward established, homogeneous, more conservative churches. These are churches in which family (past and present) have been long time members. Churches tend to be very conscious of tradition and are often vocal advocates for strong government that reduces crime, protects human rights, and provides opportunities for advancement into the middle class.

Many of the towns in which they live are struggling economically as urbanization and globalization have forced long standing industries to close or relocate. The church provides emotional and relational stability. It serves as a “rock” in changing times. It often provides social services and career counseling programs, along with day care or elder care for hardworking households.

Rural Southern Bliss are workaholics by necessity just to survive, but they are generally optimistic about the future and look to the church to sustain a positive vision. In some contexts, there may be growing interest in bi-racial churches that provide positive role models for reconciliation and cooperation. They can become bridges between lifestyle segments in ideologically polarized communities.

Color Key	High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority
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High Priorities also marked with “X” for churches photocopying in black and white.

Leadership Preferences

Resource: *Spiritual Leadership* by Thomas Bandy (Abingdon Press)

	Traditional		Progressive		Radical
x	Caregiver		Discipler		Visionary
x	Enabler		Guru		Mentor
	CEO				Pilgrim

Rural Southern Bliss respect clergy, and it is important for pastors to sustain their respect. Clergy are strong role models for faith and values and hold members accountable for their spiritual lives with confidence and credibility. They are very knowledgeable about scripture, and more interested in practical applications to daily living than doctrines and abstractions. They are often excellent communicators, speak motivationally using stories and personal experiences, and use Biblical metaphors to describe current events. They are regular visitors in homes, hospitals, and other public institutions, and network effectively among other social service and healthcare agencies.

Clergy have often graduated from a Bible College, or received training as lay pastors from established denominations, and some have been ordained by a denomination or congregation. Some may be bi-vocational, which adds to their credibility in the community. Clergy need to have good diplomatic skills but are assertive leaders for strategic planning and leadership accountability. The pastor's family members are expected to model Christian attitudes and behaviors, and success as head of family reinforces authority within the church family.

Lifestyle Connectivity

Clergy are always "on call" and should respond quickly to answering machine messages and voicemail. They have some social media presence on popular platforms to keep up to date on member households. Make an appointment to visit since it is often considered a special occasion requiring preparation.

Hospitality Preferences

Resource: *Worship Ways* by Thomas Bandy and Lucinda Holmes (Abingdon Press)

	Traditional		Modern		Postmodern
x	The Basics	x	Multiple Choices	x	Take-Out
			Healthy Choices		

Rural Southern Bliss try hard to honor the Sabbath day. They come early to church for Sunday school, stay for worship, and linger for refreshments, lunch, fellowship, or recreation with their brothers and sisters in Christ. They like to wear their best clothes to honor the day. They try to be on their best behavior, and exercise their spiritual gifts for singing, teaching, caregiving, praying, and so on. Greeters are important, not so much to welcome visitors, but to honor members and their extended families and occasionally help the elderly or young mothers negotiate steps and hallways. Refreshments should be available throughout the day. Refreshments include basic brewed coffee and tea (hot and cold), and lemonade or water. Food may be donated, but usually include inexpensive treats from the supermarket. Make sure there is plenty of it, and whatever is left over can be sent home for snacks or frozen for next Sunday. Fellowship dinners may be jumbo-sized orders of fast food (chicken, fries, etc.) rather than prepared meals. Regional preferences may include broiled crawfish, catfish, or other local delicacies.

Lifestyle Connectivity

Light-hearted Sunday morning conversations may continue through social media, but deeper and more confidential sharing will always be in person with the pastor or small group. They may share common enthusiasms for television or radio programming.

Worship Preferences Resource: *Worship Ways* by Thomas Bandy and Lucinda Holmes (Abingdon Press)

Traditional		Modern		Postmodern	
x	Caregiving Worship	x	Inspirational Worship		Mission-Connection Worship
	Educational Worship	x	Transformational Worship		Coaching Worship
	Healing Worship				

Rural Southern Bliss expect worship to be uplifting, joyful, and thankful. Worship encourages participants to connect to the Gospel with their hearts and worship may explore a whole range of emotions. Time is generally forgotten in worship. Worship is very participatory. Music is both performed and sung, and either way people react spontaneously to the lyrics and rhythm. Prayers initiated by the pastor or lay leader are enlarged and supplemented by spontaneous prayers or affirmations by other people. Scripture is highlighted throughout the service. Family celebrations are noted. There may be one or two offerings, and perhaps altar calls or healing prayer. Preaching may continue for some time. Preachers may be inspired to follow an unexpected train of thought. The sermon is passionate, motivational, and anchored in scripture. It is applicable to daily living and may refer to ongoing Bible study or small group conversations. Elders, deacons, or other lay leaders may stand with the preacher to lend vocal and emotional support to the message, and people will respond vocally to affirm key insights. Preacher and congregation tend to feed off one another's energy and help one another concentrate on the wisdom and power of the Word. People may sit in pews or chairs, but there is often plenty of space to move about, and a spacious enough stage for pastors to move as they preach or choirs to sing.

Lifestyle Connectivity

Worship is often unsupported by any technology other than a piano or organ, although there may be a simple audio system. Livestream worship does not convey the power or promote the intimacy of worship.

Education Preferences

Resource: *See, Know, and Serve* by Thomas Bandy (Abingdon Press)

Form		Content		Grouping	
x	Curricular	x	Biblical	x	Generational
x	Experiential		Topical		Peer Group

Rural Southern Bliss are apt to spend a good portion of their Sunday at church. Sunday school often precedes worship for children and adults. Increasingly, however, adult Sunday school consists of older adults in traditional Bible study classes led by mature and highly respected matriarchs or patriarchs of the church. Younger adults may gather for fellowship and broader, more topical conversation in the kitchen, refreshment center, or outside. Many younger adults are already committed to various forms of continuing education related to job proficiency or career advancement. The children's Sunday school is traditional and mirrors the age-based K-8 classroom experience of public school. They study a curriculum based on scripture. Teachers are often matriarchs of the church and their apprentices. Sunday school teachers and the women's association together represent a significant influence in the life of the church.

Lifestyle Connectivity

The section of the church website devoted to youth ministry is the most important. Update regularly with images, stories, and virtual resources addressing practical social challenges and vocational discernment.

Small Group Preferences

Resource: *See, Know, and Serve* by Thomas Bandy (Abingdon Press)

Leadership		Focus	
x	Trained Leader		Curriculum Study
	Rotate Leaders	x	Shared Affinity

Rural Southern Bliss value midweek small groups most when they are oriented to Bible Study, leadership training, or community service. Timing for small groups is very pragmatic. Many groups will gather in the early morning for breakfast before work, or during other natural breaks in the workday. Weekends or other days off work often prioritize family responsibilities and activities. Although group discussions emphasize scripture, groups are shaped around a shared affinity (enthusiasm, activity, or need). The affinity may be very practical (like automobile maintenance or sports), or it may be urgent (like parenting or job resume coaching). Support groups are becoming more common to address temporary unemployment, divorce recovery, or addiction intervention.

Successful small groups tend to have designated leaders appointed and trained by the pastor. Groups that rely on rotating leadership do not tend to last very long. Unless there is a designated leader, accountability within the group for spiritual discipline and mutual support may break down. The pastor's involvement is a key to success. The pastor often mentors a small group of men and women to become more confident in spiritual leadership, and then deploys them to develop their own small groups. The pastor continues to meet with them for accountability and ongoing coaching. The church usually supports a very strong teen youth program and may pay a stipend to train and deploy a youth minister. The youth program includes elements for recreation and fellowship, Bible Study and prayer, and local mission service. The challenge is to provide relevant Christian education opportunities for teens and young adults. This is tied to a second challenge to create mentoring relationships between patriarchs of the church and young men. Some young men fill this gap with task groups and mission teams of the church, in which advanced mentoring in Christian living may be continued. Men's groups and youth groups often work together. Large groups allow multi-generational families to participate together.

Lifestyle Connectivity

Social media is increasingly valuable to sustain small and large group participation. There may be dedicated chat rooms for different groups. The minister or youth leader initiates and guides conversation and monitors interaction.

Outreach Preferences

Resource: *Strategic Thinking* by Thomas Bandy (Abingdon Press)

	Personal Need	Readiness to Volunteer
Basic Survival	x	x
Health and Wellness	x	x
Quality of Life	x	x
Addiction Intervention		x
Interpersonal Relationships	x	x
Human Potential	x	x
Salvation and Human Destiny		x

Rural Southern Bliss have deep roots in the community, and can usually rely on extended family, friends, and neighbors to help them out in times of need. There are times when these networks do not have the resources or spiritual authority to help. Churches often provide opportunities for short term financial aid, legal aid, food, medical attention, and addiction intervention that is otherwise unavailable from personal or community networks. They often partner with other organizations to advocate for policies related to human rights, immigration, healthcare, primary and secondary school education, and equal opportunity employment. They organize in the community for crime prevention and safe environments. This may include task groups to clean up properties, escort children on Halloween night, coach parenting and household skills to young singles and couples or offer family financial planning services. Diet and nutrition are increasingly important health issues.

Create a community center where people can gather informally during the week, connect with advisors from the church, and find temporary help. Clergy often seek special training to organize and direct faith-based, non-profit organizations or Christian schools that are developed in association with the church. Anything that encourages upward mobility, job placement, and career advancement is interesting to people in this segment. Churches develop links with community colleges or university scholarship programs and like to encourage young adults to discern spiritual gifts and sharpen creative talents. People are willing to sacrifice personal and family time to get ahead, and the church can support them emotionally and spiritually as they go and grow.

Lifestyle Connectivity

Young adults who relocate for education or jobs maintain contacts with their hometown and home church. They use popular social media platforms and may contribute images or greetings through the church website.

Facility Preferences

Resource: *See, Know, and Serve* by Thomas Bandy (Abingdon Press)

Property		Technology		Symbolism	
x	Ecclesiastical	x	Modern	x	Classic Christendom
x	Utilitarian		Postmodern		Contemporary Post-Christendom

Rural Southern Bliss treasure ecclesiastical-looking church facilities, but if that building is destroyed, they are apt to build a more multi-purpose facility in its place. Older buildings include a mix of architectures and materials, with accumulated additions and renovations over the years carried out by volunteers. They may relocate to another church building if membership growth, or the need for specialized outreach space, requires it. They might also relocate and build a utilitarian structure, especially if this provides additional outdoor space for team sports, fellowship, and evangelical outreach. The kitchen is updated. People in this segment tend to eat fast or frozen food, so there is often a freezer and microwave available. Worship space may be a traditional sanctuary that has been retrofitted for inspirational or transformational worship. The hard wood is often removed from a chancel area to allow enlarged musical groups, and free the pastor from the pulpit. Pews may be replaced by chairs, center aisles widened, and front rows removed to provide more space for interaction. Vestibules may be expanded for fellowship.

Lifestyle Connectivity

Audio has priority over video. Music is important, and electrical supplies may be upgraded for amplifiers and electronic keyboards. Internet is probably not important. If there is an office in the church building itself, it may well have computer and internet access, but files and records still tend to be hard copy and stored in filing cabinets. There also may be storage or display areas for memorials and precious symbols from the past.

Financial Preferences

Resource: *See, Know, and Serve* by Thomas Bandy (Abingdon Press)

Giving Target		Giving Method	
x	Unified Budgets & General Funds		Informed Philanthropy & Pledging
	Designated Programs & Mission Projects	x	Lifestyle Coaching & Family Financial Planning

Rural Southern Bliss live on tight budgets, but they are generous toward churches. They often “walk a second mile” to give extra to a special mission project, overcome an operations deficit, or make an urgent repair to the building. They trust the church to spend money wisely, and members may not always demand an audited financial statement or even a detailed budget. They are motivated to give mainly by the spiritual credibility and vision of the pastor and core leaders. Leaders often set a benchmark for financial giving and declare their own financial commitment in advance of a fund-raising campaign. The campaign is usually based on several rallies and prayer vigils through the year rather than home visits limited to one season of the year. Donations are usually in cash or in-kind (labor, materials, expertise, and resources). Many households appreciate coaching for Christian family financial planning or coaching for entrepreneurship and starting a business.

Lifestyle Connectivity

They are unlikely to pre-authorize withdrawals and may top-up pledges at the end of the year to the best of their ability. Cash flow can be a problem and their may be multiple fund-raisers through the year.

Communication

Resource: *Mosaic E-Handbook* by Experian

Communication in Daily Living					Communication in Church Participation						
x	Broadcast/Streaming TV	x	Direct Mail		Radio		Live/Recorded Video	x	Print and Paper	x	Announcements or Visits
	Mobile SMS		Email	x	Social Media		Text Message		Email	x	Social Media

Rural Southern Bliss rely on oral communication in large gatherings and small groups to communicate information or learn new things. Posters may be used in local diners, community centers, hospitals, and sports arenas to advertise opportunities to the community. Handouts, newsletters and mailing, outdoor signage is common.

Lifestyle Connectivity

They adopt technology as needed. They are increasingly familiar with social media. Websites can be valuable if they provide resources for personal growth and career development. They are very responsive to television and radio and may be influenced by religious programming.